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# Homes for Teaching Deaf Children to Speak.

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Principal Home for Training in Speech of Deaf Children  
before they are of School Age,  
Belmont and Monument Avenues,  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U. S. A.

- I. What they should be;
- II. How their general establishment will at once shorten the time for which deaf children must be separated from their parents for their education;
- III. How they will, if properly conducted, finally do away with any separation at all.

## I.

### WHAT THEY SHOULD BE.

The idea conveyed to the mind on the mention of the word "Home" in its general sense, is usually more what a home should be, than what a careful examination of facts shows many homes really to be.

The expression, "Home influence," is often carelessly used to express an influence necessarily good—but home influence is not necessarily good. It is not long since the generally accepted idea of a good mother, was a mother whose whole time and thoughts were given to her own children and their interests; fortunately, the broad principle of humanity and love to all is beginning to unveil the selfishness of such a policy, and mothers are training their children to work with them for all who need their help.

The opportunities for influencing children in their homes are the best possible, because they are of the age when they

presented by the author —

accept everything unquestioningly, and when the most lasting impressions are made. The benefit of these opportunities is lost to deaf children, unless they are taught at the same natural age as hearing children, the speech and language, which are the only medium through which clear and complete ideas can be communicated, and through which children can be properly developed.

Even parents, who not only realize this, but who further realize that the deaf child must from infancy be guided to learn speech and language through sight, feeling and imitation, and that it must have nothing to imitate as a medium of communication but articulate speech—find, that in a way, every man's hand is against them in their efforts; so that they cannot make the child's home what it should be. From the moment a child is discovered to be deaf, everyone, more or less unconsciously, begins to treat it differently from a hearing child, which naturally tends to make it different. People also continually convey ideas to them through motions, instead of simply giving them the same repetition of speech and language, through the eye, while learning, which a hearing child receives at the same period through its ability to hear every word spoken in its presence, whether addressed to it or not. This, and the fact that so many parents do not yet know what can be done for deaf children, nor how to do it, led my sister to found in Pennsylvania a "Home for the Training in Speech of Deaf Children before they are of school age," where she hoped to show what the home influence should be to give deaf children the same means that hearing children are given, to prepare them to enjoy the good things of this world, and to intelligently perform their share of the world's work.

That you may have an idea of our Home life, I will read from my part of the Report about to be issued:

## REPORT OF SECRETARY AND PRINCIPAL.

"As our methods are in no wise changed from those inaugurated by Emma Garrett, it will be necessary to repeat some paragraphs of our last report in order to give a clear and accurate report of progress at this date.

"The object of the Home is to give young deaf children the same conditions and opportunities for learning speech and language through the eye, that we had at the natural age for learning through the ear, it having been proven that when this is done the deaf child learns like the hearing one. To this end, the little ones are continually surrounded by influences guiding them to articulate speech and speech reading. An idea is never conveyed to their brains through any motion or sign; it is thought better for them to go temporarily without understanding, until they are able to understand through repeated speech in connection with objects and evident ideas, so that they may form and perfect the habit of talking, and of speech reading, which will be everything to them during their later lives.

"They eat at the table with grown people, and are constantly attended in their walks, plays, baths, and sleeping rooms, by educated house-mothers, whose office is to talk with them, just as to hearing children, and intelligently guide them to the use and understanding of speech. The dining tables are so arranged that each child sits at a table with grown people, whose business it is to keep the conversation on the plane of the child, and yet to guide it onward; so that the babies are addressed in simple sentences and only expected to use words; the children who are learning the first sentences are guided to use them; and the older children are engaged in conversation through which they are constantly learning new words, combinations and facts. The children spend four hours and

three-quarters divided into five periods, with the teachers daily, (except Saturdays and Sundays). The work with the younger ones is, of course, not routine class work, and with all of the children it is principally speech and language, although the older ones are now gaining general information through this medium. They are learning to write, but writing is not used to explain anything to them which they cannot understand through speech, which is always first, as it was with us. We teach the vertical system, because it uses less paper, believing that every opportunity to teach economy to the American nation should be taken advantage of.

"The older ones have the habit of speech sufficiently to be permitted and encouraged to write weekly letters. They also read children's books now, and we have commenced a library of simple stories and sketches, from which they select fortnightly. From learning the names of the parts of the body, they have advanced to the acquiring of the knowledge of the organs and their uses, and how to care for the body in order to preserve health. From having seen the ocean, travelled some on the railroad, and seen several cities, we have been able to teach them about our vacation trips, all of which not only keep them in touch with our lives and interests, but lay the foundations for future studies in geography. Much of their language is obtained through studies of nature, and the situation of our home being in the country district of Philadelphia, gives many delightful opportunities for them. Our good neighbor Reichner's farm, has furnished many and most fascinating lessons.

"They are commencing to know and understand about William Penn, and a morning full of interest and improvement for them was recently spent in visiting his house in the Park. As soon as the smaller children can articulate the names of animals, they are taken to the neighboring Zoologi-

cal Garden. The children read rapidly from the lips, all that they know, and, as with us when we were learning a new language, they understand for a while more than they can say. They have physical culture, the older girls are taught sewing on Saturday mornings, and the boys Sloyd; the older ones also sit up an hour after tea, and play games with the teachers. They have daily exercise and play in the fresh air, and, that they may learn to be useful and helpful, the older ones make their beds, can dust rooms and clear and set tables beautifully. Of course they will learn their business or trades later from the hearing people among whom they must ply them.

“While the delusion that deaf children are imbeciles has passed away, there still remains in the community, a habit of treating them differently from hearing children, which ends in making them different. Were it not for this, each mother and family could do the work for its deaf child better than we can, as she should begin at six months old and talk to it, and treat it exactly the same as her other children; and the family, friends, and community should do just the same; and the result would be just what it has been with the few deaf children who have been fairly treated—the child would become like other children, and not be able later to remember when it could not understand.

“We cannot well admit babies under two years of age, but we can, of course, do much more for them commencing at that age, than if their speech training were deferred several years beyond the natural age; and we look forward to a time—which I trust, is not more than a generation distant—when family, friends, and the community, will so aid the mother, by talking to her deaf child exactly as to her hearing ones, that we shall not need institutions especially for them.

“Among deaf children are some who have more or less perception of sound, and yet insufficient to learn speech

through it. Of late years efforts have been made in institutions for the deaf to develop their hearing, and various instruments are used. We do not use any instruments, but we frequently test the little ones to discover any latent hearing, and when we succeed, we simply repeat the words and language they have learned through the eye into the ear until they learn to recognize it, and we have had some very encouraging results.

"We also find that it is worth while to persevere in trying to develop a little hearing, even in children who for a long time seem not to have a vestige."

It is well to remember in training deaf children that although they cannot have the advantages that come through hearing sounds, they are also saved from certain disadvantages. Their brains are not wearied with constant sounds and constant subjects, so that they are entirely able to take all the repetition of ordinary colloquial and idiomatic language necessary to give them a thorough knowledge of it. Their nervous systems are also saved the shocks that come from what might be called the "blows of sounds" that are harsh and violent.

We do not give vacations, because interruptions to the acquiring of speech, and the speech habit during the first few years are fatal to the facility and freedom of communication with their families and others which we wish to give the children before they leave us. The teachers have vacations in turn, and substitutes for them are provided. I have given special training for the work to all the teachers and substitutes employed in the Home.

We admit children between the ages of two and eight years, giving them a six years' course from time of entrance. Nearly all the children who have completed two-thirds of our course give every evidence that at the end they will be able to

go to schools with their hearing brothers and sisters; a few may need a little longer training here.

The children's parents and friends are received on Wednesday afternoons, between two and five o'clock, and everything is done to keep up and encourage the children's love for them.

Each room has a large frame in which the photographs of the children's parents, relatives and friends are constantly before them, and the first words taught are "Mamma," "Papa," etc., and all their home interests are subjects of constant conversation.

## II.

Up to the present time, with rare exceptions, deaf children have entered schools for the deaf with no knowledge of the speech and language, which should precede their school training. No such severe course is ever adopted towards hearing children. To make any progress under these circumstances, they must be separated from their homes and families for courses of study covering a dozen years or more. If these schools can be superseded by the general establishment of properly conducted homes, it may be hoped that the influences sent out by these may so instruct parents and the community that in the course of a few years or a generation the home influence in every deaf child's family may become what it should be to give the little deaf child the same chance to learn speech and language, and to develop all its powers, as is accorded to its more fortunate brothers and sisters.

## III.

Then there need be no more separation of children from their homes than there is with hearing children.

